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FLUORESCENT BALLAST WITH FIBER OPTIC AND IR CONTROL

Priority Claimed on SN.60-281,841 filed 4-6-01 (ABANDONED)

Continuation in part of patent application SN. 10/104,076 filed 3-21-02 (PENDING)

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of power inverters used for electronic lighting ballast and use of light sensors and fiber optics wires to control them. A typical ballast lighting system contains an infra red (IR) receptor as well as a fiber optic light conductor to conduct the IR pulsed from a point external to the lighting fixture to the internally incorporated IR receptor. The fiber optic conducted light is also used to control and maintain the user selected amount of light on the illuminated surface by the use of feedback of the light sensed at the input of the fiber optic wire.

2. Brief Description of the Prior Art

There are many varied public domain circuits involving the generation of high frequency inputs for driving fluorescent lamps, compact fluorescent lamps, high intensity discharge and other forms of gas discharged lighting. There are a number of methods of controlling lighting levels all of which involve some sort of signal over a control wire or the power line. One of the problems with many lighting systems is adjusting the light level on a fixture by fixture basis. Even the new dimmable ballasts with control inputs must be told by some remote control system what light level is required. A better system in many applications is to allow the ballast and thus the light emitted by a fixture to be adjusted locally by the person or persons working in the illuminated area. To the best of this inventors knowledge there is no prior art involving a gas discharge lighting ballast that incorporates within it an IR detector or a visible light detector with a fiber optic light conductor to allow remote setting of or maintenance of the light level.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the above problems and difficulties are obviated by the present invention which is a gas discharge lighting ballast with circuitry to allow the level of the lighting device to be locally set using a light sensor within the gas discharge lighting ballasting device and a light conducting fiber, sometimes called a light pipe or fiber optic wire, to conduct light levels and light signals from an external source outside the fixture in which the gas discharge lighting device is mounted.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

Therefore, it is among the primary objects of this invention to supply a simple and easy method to locally adjust the light level of gas discharged lighting device.

It is another object of this invention to maintain the light level, once set, at the preset level.

Yet another object of the invention is to accomplish the above objects with a minimum amount of hardware and therefore for a price that makes the device acceptable in the marketplace.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features of the present invention which are believed to be novel are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The present invention, both as to its organization and manner of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may best be understood with reference to the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which :

FIGURE 1 shows a half bridge configuration of an inverter with switching alternately applied again between points A and B. Because switching device A is not connected to the common bus, only certain types of switches may be used practically in this application. For example, a vacuum tube would be very difficult but not impossible to apply here;

FIGURE 2 is a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the subject invention driving a gas discharge lighting device;

FIGURE 3 depicts a change in the preferred embodiment of FIGURE 2 to drive a flat panel lighting display light;

FIGURE 4 is a schematic representation illustrating a microprocessor chip the control module of FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 5 is a depiction of how a light sensing device is connected to the microprocessor of FIGURE 4 and to a fiber optic wire to allow for external information to be supplied to the microprocessor; and

FIGURE 6 is a software flow chart of the most desirable way for a ballast to start and operate a fluorescent lamp which can greatly prolong the life of the driven lamp.

OPERATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to Figure 2, electrical power enters from the AC power line on lines 1 and 2 to the AC to DC converter module 3 and leaves on lines 4 and 5 as plus and minus DC power. The AC to DC conversion module 3 can be any form of public domain conversion system. In this instance, a 4 diode bridge is depicted. The DC voltage and current is further conditioned and regulated to correct the power factor and harmonic distortion with respect to the power line by regulator and/or power conditioner 86 which could be any form of public domain regulator such as the method depicted in my patent No. 4,277,728, now expired. ‘And/or’ is used in the description because in some applications only power conditioning is needed and in other cases only regulation is needed. A single circuit does either or both but the one that does both is more expensive to manufacture.

Block 6 is the half bridge converter as shown in Figure 1. Line 17 connects point A of Figure 2 to the control and drive module 24. Line 18 connects point B of Figure 1 to the control and drive module. The output of the half bridge 6 is on line 7 and connects, via DC blocking capacitor 9, to inductor 8. It also connects to control and drive module 24 via line 19. DC blocking capacitor 9 is large enough that its value does not enter into the resonant calculation but acts simply to pass the AC with little or no impedance while totally blocking any DC component from flowing into the load. Inductor 8 and capacitor

10 make up a series resonant circuit that converts the square wave output of the half bridge to a sine wave This is applied to the output load in this case a gas discharge lighting device 15 by line 16 and through current sensing resistor 32 to line 11. Transformer 12 connected between line 16 and through current sensing resistor 72 to line 11, across the load, provides power for the lamp's heaters 91 and 92 from secondary windings 13 and 14 respectively.

Control module 24, which will be further discussed under the description of Figure 4, receives the current feedback from current sense resistor 32, which also may be any other form of current sensor, via line 22. Output voltage across the load is fed back on line 21. This line also serves to feed back the phase of the sign wave that is presented across the load and may be used by the control module to maintain a resonant frequency if required. Heater current is fed back via line 73 as a voltage drop across resistor 72 which is in series with the primary of heater transformer 12. When power line carrier signal is used to send control information to the control and drive module, the signal is presented to the module through lines 25 and 26. Photocell input on line 27 which is either a series of operational input control pulses or the amount of light on the surface illuminated by the gas discharge lighting device or both. Manual/local control of the output power may be adjusted by potentiometer 70 the wiper of which is connected at microprocessor input 17 via line 28. Resistor 71 in series with potentiometer 70 sets the minimum output level.

Logic power to the control module is provided from the logic power module 23 which is supplied from either the DC bus 4 via line 93 for start up or winding 95 on inductor 8 via line 96. A supply of isolated power for the operation of various control devices by tapping power from inductor 8 via secondary 97 connected by lines 98 and 99 to bridge rectifier 100. The output of bridge rectifier 100 is fed via line 101 to regulator 102 while line 104, connected to the (-) side of the bridge rectified becomes the common for this isolated supply which is output at 103.

Referring to Figure 3, the connection for the electro-luminescent or flat panel display is shown. The two points X and X are connected in Figure 2 where the X and X are to replace the circuitry to the right of the X's in Figure 2. Inductor 8 is connected in

the same manner as in Figure 2, but capacitor 10 of Figure 2 is replaced by the electro-luminescent panel itself, 31. The panel is, in fact, a large capacitor, therefore, it serves not only as the load, but as the resonant capacitive element. The DC blocking capacitor 9 of Figure 2 is not needed since the load itself is a capacitor.

Referring now to Figure 4 logic power for microprocessor 40 is fed in on line 44 from the logic power module. It is further filtered by capacitor 45 and supplied to the microprocessor at the Vdd input 14 on line 46. The operating frequency of the processor chip is set by the selection of crystal or resonator 50 which is loaded by capacitors 42 and 51 connected to the processor at the oscillator inputs 15 and 16 by lines 41 and 49. The frequency is varied according to the application. For example, when driving a flat panel display, the frequency is between 800 and 1,000 hertz. When driving a high-intensity discharge lamp, the frequency may be as high as 100 kilohertz or more. Typical fluorescent lamp applications operate in a frequency between 20 and 70 kilohertz.

The microprocessor output is at pins 6 and 8. Pin 6 is connected directly by line 18 to the drive point B to turn on the bottom transistor in the half bridge. Output Pin 8 is connected by line 53 to high side driver to drive the top transistor at point A through line 17. Since this transistor is not referenced to the common bus, a high side driver must be employed. Power for the high side driver used to drive the transistor is created by charging capacitor 56 through diode 53 when the bottom transistor is on and the output of the bridge is low.

The voltage across the output load is fed back by line 21 and divided by voltage divider resistors 58 and 59 to a voltage that is acceptable to the processor. It is then fed by line 114 to input 7 to allow the microprocessor software to determine the phase angle of the output voltage. By adjusting the frequency to maintain a 90 degree phase shift across the resonant inductor 8 the processor can be sure that the output is always at resonance. The voltage at the junction of resistors 58 and 59 is also rectified by diode 60 and filtered by capacitor 62 and load resistor 61 to input 3 via line 63 to allow the microprocessor to determine the output voltage magnitude. This is very useful when driving the flat panel display of Figure 3.

The load current is sensed by sensor 32 of Figure 2 and is fed in via line 22 to capacitor 106 which is part of a voltage doubler consisting of capacitor 106 diode 108 and diode 74. A doubler is used so current sense resistor 32 may be reduced in size by a factor of 2 thus reducing any heat loss the resistor. The doubled voltage is filtered by capacitor 66 and resistor 65 and presented to analog input at Pin 1 via line 67. The voltage representing the heater current is fed on line 73 to doubler consisting of capacitor 105, diode 107 and diode 74 and filtered by capacitor 76 and load resistor and fed by line 77 to the microprocessor. Local control of the output power may be adjusted by potentiometer 70 of Figure 2, the wiper of which is connected at input 17 via line 28. Resistor 71 in series with potentiometer 70 sets the minimum output level. The output voltage from the photocell may be both analog or digital and is carried by line 27 to the microprocessor input at Pin 18. This form of a light sensing device 33 is also referred to as a photocell.

Figure 5 depicts a light sensing device 33 connected to a fiber optic wire 35 by connecting collar 34. The fiber optic wire passes though the ballast can wall 36. The ballast enclosure, also called a can, contains all the electronic ballasting components and is mounted inside the fixture containing the gas discharge lighting device. The fiber optic wire 35 then passes though the fixture wall 37. The end of the fiber optic wire 35 extends into the illuminated area and receives visible light rays 43 from the illuminated surface 47 and IR pulses 39 from hand held IR transmitter 38. The level of light and the presence or absence of IR pulses is fed as an electrical signal via line 27 to microprocessor 40 at input 18. The software program within the microprocessor detects sudden changes in light as digital pulses and the average light level for adjusting the illumination.

Remote control is normally a pulse width modulation control signal and therefore it is digital and will be presented by line 30 to digital input at Pin 12. If a power line carrier signal is sent, it is sensed on lines 25 and 26 at inputs 10 and 11 which look for changes on the power line signal at the zero crossing point. Two inputs are used to look for each half cycle of the power line.

Figure 6 is a software flow chart for a high frequency power supply that is operating as a fluorescent ballast which is included to show of the complexity of function